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THE
HOLY QURAN

ENGLISH TAFSEER
CHAPTER 65
SURAH AT-TALAQ

COMMENTARY & EXPLANATORY

By
ABDULLAH YUSUF ALI

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HOLY QURAN

CHAPTER

065

SURAH AT-TALAQ

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Introduction and Summary

This is the ninth of the ten short Madinah Surahs dealing with the social life of the Community. The aspect dealt with here is Divorce, and the necessity of precautions to guard against its abuse. The relations of the sexes are an important factor in the social life of Community, and this and the following Surah deal with certain aspects of it. "Of all things permitted by law", said the prophet (peace be upon him), "divorce is the most hateful in the sight of Allah". (Abu Dawud, Sunan, 13:3). While the sanctity of marriage is the essential basis of family life, the

incompatibility of individuals and the weaknesses of human nature require certain outlets and safeguards if that sanctity is not to be made into a fetish at the expense of human life. That why the question of Divorce is in this Surah linked with the question of insolent impiety and its punishment.

The date somewhere about A.H. 6, but the chronology has no significance.

Summary- Provision to be made for women in case of Divorce; insolent impiety always leads to punishment (65:1-12), and C.244).

C.244 (The running Commentary, in Rhythmic Prose)

*Guard well your truth and pure integrity
In sex relation. Keep the tie
Of marriage sacred; but where it must
Be dissolved, use all precautions to ensure
Justice to the weaker party and protect
The interests of unborn or newborn lives
As well as social decency; and close not
To the last the door of reconciliation.
Allah's laws must be obeyed; 'tis man's
Own loss if he deaf to the Voice
Which teaches him, or blind to the Light
Which guides him. Allah's universe
Of beauty and wonder stands strong in wisdom:
Let man but tune himself thereto.*

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

يَا أَيُّهَا النَّبِيُّ ...

1. O Prophet!

C5503. Note that in the first instance the Prophet is himself addressed individually, as the Teacher and representative of the Community. Then the actual directions: "when ye : are addressed to the Community collectively.

... إِذَا طَلَقْتُمُ النِّسَاءَ ...

when ye do divorce women,

C5504. "Of all things permitted by law, Divorce is the most hateful in the sight of Allah"; see Introduction to this Surah.

The general directions and limitations of Divorce may be studied in 2: 2:228-232, 236-237,241, and notes; also 4:35.

... فَطَلُّوهُنَّ لِعِدَّتِهِنَّ ...

divorce them at their prescribed periods, ...

C5505. 'Iddah, as a technical term in divorce law, is explained in n. 254 to ii. 228. Its general meaning is "a prescribed period": in that general sense it is used in 2:185 for a prescribed period for fasting.

... وَأَحْصُوا الْعِدَّةَ وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ رَبَّكُمْ ...

...and count (accurately) their prescribed periods: and fear Allah your Lord:

C5506. The prescribed period (see last note) is in the interests of the wife, of the husband, of an unborn child (if there is any), and of sex laws in nature, and therefore the elementary dictates of refined human society.

In English Law the six months interval between the decree nisi and the decree absolute in divorce attains the same purpose in a round-about way.

The Commentators suggest that the divorce should not be pronounced during the courses. Read with 2:222, this implies that any incipient differences between husband and wife should not be forced to an issue at a time when sex is least attractive and almost repulsive. Everything should be done to strengthen the social and spiritual aspects of marriage and keep down stray impulses of animal instinct. The parties are to think seriously in a mood of piety, keeping the fear of Allah in their minds.

... لَا تُخْرِجُوهُنَّ مِنْ بُيُوتِهِنَّ وَلَا يَخْرُجْنَ إِلَّا أَنْ يَأْتِيَنَّ بِفَاحِشَةٍ مُبَيَّنَةٍ ...

and turn them not out of their houses, **nor shall they (themselves) leave**, except in case they are guilty of some open lewdness.

C5507. As Islam treats the married woman as a full juristic personality in every sense of the term a married woman has a right, in the married state, to a house or apartment of her own. And a house or apartment implies the reasonable expenses for its upkeep and for her own and her children's maintenance. And this is obligatory not only in the married state, but during the 'iddat, which is necessarily a most trying period for the woman. During this period she must not only not be turned out, but it is not decent for her to leave of her own accord, lest the chances of reconciliation should be diminished: see the next note.

... وَتِلْكَ حُدُودُ اللَّهِ ...

Those are limits set by Allah:

... وَمَنْ يَتَعَدَّ حُدُودَ اللَّهِ فَقَدْ ظَلَمَ نَفْسَهُ ...

and any who transgresses the limits of Allah, does verily wrong his (own) soul:

... لَا تَدْرِي لَعَلَّ اللَّهَ يُحْدِثُ بَعْدَ ذَلِكَ أَمْرًا (١)

thou knowest not if perchance Allah will bring about thereafter some new situation.

C5508. A reconciliation is possible, and is indeed recommended at every stage. The first serious difference between the parties are to be submitted to a family council on which both sides are represented (4:35); divorce is not to be pronounced when mutual physical attraction is at an ebb (n. 5506); when it is pronounced, there should be a period of probationary waiting: dower has to be paid and due provision has to be made for many things on equitable terms; every facility has to be given for reconciliation till the last moment, and impediments are provided against hasty impulses leading to rupture. "Thou knowest not if perchance Allah will bring about thereafter some new situation."

فَإِذَا بَلَغْنَ أَجَلَهُنَّ فَأَمْسِكُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ أَوْ قَارِفُوهُنَّ بِمَعْرُوفٍ ...

2. Thus when they fulfil their term appointed, either take them back on equitable terms or part with them on equitable terms;

C5509. Cf. 2:231. Everything should be done fairly and squarely, and all interests should be safeguarded.

... وَأَشْهَدُوا ذَوِي عَدْلٍ مِّنكُمْ وَأَقِيمُوا الشَّهَادَةَ لِلَّهِ ...

and take for witness two persons from among you, endued with justice, and establish the evidence (as) before Allah.

C5510. Publicity and the establishment of proper evidence ensure that no one will act unjustly or selfishly. All should remember that these are matters of serious import, affecting our most intimate lives, and therefore our position in the spiritual kingdom.

... ذَلِكُمْ يُوعَظُ بِهِ مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ ...

Such is the admonition given to him who believes in Allah and the Last Day.

... وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مَخْرَجًا (٢)

And for those who fear Allah, He (ever) prepares a way out,

C5511. In these very delicate and difficult matters, the wisdom of jurists provides a less satisfactory solution than a sincere desire to be just and true, which is described as the "fear of Allah". Where such a desire

exists, Allah often provides a solution in the most unexpected ways or from the most unexpected quarters; e.g., the worst enemies may be reconciled, or the cry or the smile of an infant baby may heal seemingly irreparable injuries or unite hearts seemingly alienated for ever. And Faith is followed at once by a psychological feeling of rest for the troubled spirit.

وَيَرْزُقُهُ مِنْ حَيْثُ لَمْ يَحْتَسِبْ ...

3. And He provides for him from (sources) he never could imagine.

... وَمَنْ يَتَوَكَّلْ عَلَى اللَّهِ فَهُوَ حَسْبُهُ ...

And if anyone puts his trust in Allah, sufficient is (Allah) for him.

... إِنَّ اللَّهَ بِأَمْرِهِ قَدْ جَعَلَ اللَّهُ لِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدْرًا (٣)

For Allah will surely **accomplish His purpose**: verily, for all things has Allah appointed a due proportion.

C5512. Our anger and our impatience have to be curbed. Our friends and our mates or associates may seem to us ever so weak and unreasonable, and the circumstances may be ever so disheartening; yet we must trust in Allah. How can we measure our own weakness or perhaps blindness? He knows all. His universal Purpose is always good. His Will must be accomplished, and we should wish for its accomplishment. His ordering of the universe observes a due, just, and perfect proportion.

وَاللَّائِي يَئِسْنَ مِنَ الْمَحِيضِ مِنْ نَسَائِكُمْ ...

4. Such of your women as have passed the age of monthly courses,

... إِنْ ارْتَبْتُمْ فَعِدَّتُهُنَّ ثَلَاثَةُ أَشْهُرٍ وَاللَّائِي لَمْ يَحِضْنَ ...

for them the prescribed period, if you have any doubt, is three months, and for those who have no courses (it is the same):

C5513. Cf. 2:228, For normal women, the 'iddah is the three monthly courses after separation: if there are no courses or if the courses are in doubt, it is three calendar months. But that time it will be clear whether there is

pregnancy: if there is, the waiting period is still after delivery.

... وَأَوْلَاتُ الْأَحْمَالِ أَجَلُهُنَّ أَنْ يَضَعْنَ حَمْلَهُنَّ ...

for those who carry (life within their wombs), their period is until they deliver their burdens:

... وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَجْعَلْ لَهُ مِنْ أَمْرِهِ يُسْرًا (٤)

and for those who fear Allah, He will make their path easy.

C5514. Cf. n. 5511.

If there is a true and sincere desire to obey the Will of Allah and do right the difficulties will vanish, and these delicate matters will be settled for the greatest happiness of all.

ذَلِكَ أَمْرُ اللَّهِ أَنْزَلَهُ إِلَيْكُمْ ...

5. That is the Command of Allah, which He has sent down to you:

وَمَنْ يَتَّقِ اللَّهَ يَكْفُرْ عَنْهُ سَيِّئَاتِهِ وَيُعْظِمْ لَهُ أَجْرًا (٥)

and if anyone fears Allah, **He will remove his ills from him and will enlarge His reward.**

C5515. Allah's ordinance is nothing arbitrary. "It is to help us, and to lead us on to our highest good, temporal and spiritual. If we obey Allah. His wisdom will not only solve our difficulties, but it will remove other ills that we may have, subjective and objective. Like a good shepherd, He will lead us on to more and more luscious pastures. With each step higher, our position becomes more and more sure and our reward more and more precious.

أَسْكِنُوهُنَّ مِنْ حَيْثُ سَكَنْتُمْ مِنْ وُجْدِكُمْ وَلَا تُضَارُوهُنَّ لِتُضَيِّقُوا

عَلَيْهِنَّ ...

6. Let the women live (in 'iddah) in the same style as ye live, according to your means: annoy them not, so as to restrict them.

C5516. Cf. n. 5507 above.

A selfish man, because he has divorced his wife, may, in the probationary period before the divorce becomes absolute, treat her with contumely, and while giving her residence and maintenance, may so restrict it as to make her life miserable. This is forbidden. She must be provided on the same scale as he is, according to his status in life. There is still hope of reconciliation, and if not, yet the parting must be honourable.

... وَإِنْ كُنَّ أَوْلَاتٍ حَمَلٍ فَأَنْفِقُوا عَلَيْهِنَّ حَتَّى يَضَعْنَ حَمْلَهُنَّ ...

And if they carry (life in their wombs), then spend (your substance) on them until they deliver their burden:

C5517. If there is pregnancy, a sacred third life comes on the scene, for which there is added responsibility (perhaps added hope of reconciliation) for both parents. In any case no separation is possible until after the child is born. Even after birth, if no reconciliation between parents is possible, yet for the nursing of the child and for its welfare the care of the mother remains the duty of the father, and there must be mutual counsel between him and the mother in all truth and sincerity.

... فَإِنْ أَرْضَعْنَ لَكُمْ فَآتُوهُنَّ أُجُورَهُنَّ ...

and if they suckle your (offspring), give them their recompense:

... وَأْتَمِرُوا بَيْنَكُمْ بِمَعْرُوفٍ ...

and take mutual counsel together, according to what is just and reasonable.

... وَإِنْ تَعَاسَرْتُمْ فَسْتَزْضِعْ لَهُ أُخْرَى (٦)

And if ye find yourselves in difficulties, let another woman suckle (the child) on the (father's) behalf.

C5518. "If ye find yourselves in difficulties": e.g., if the mother's milk fails, or if her health fails, or if any circumstance arises which bars the natural course of the mother nursing her own child. There may be psychological difficulties also.

C5519. That is, the father must stand all expenses, without cutting down the reasonable allowance to which the mother is entitled.

لِيُنْفِقُ ذُو سَعَةٍ مِّن سَعَتِهِ ...

7. Let the man of means spend according to his means:

... وَمَنْ قُدِرَ عَلَيْهِ رِزْقُهُ فَلْيُنْفِقْ مِمَّا آتَاهُ اللَّهُ ...

and the man whose resources are restricted, let him spend according to what Allah has given him.

لَا يُكَلِّفُ اللَّهُ نَفْسًا إِلَّا مَا آتَاهَا سَيَجْعَلُ اللَّهُ بَعْدَ عُسْرٍ يُسْرًا (٧)

Allah puts no burden on any person beyond what He has given him. After a difficulty, Allah will soon grant relief.

C5520. We must trust in Allah, and do whatever is possible for us in the interests of the young life for which we are responsible. We must not be frightened by difficulties. Allah will give us relief and provide a solution if we act with honest integrity.

Cf. 94:5-6.

Section 2

وَكَايِن مِّن قُرَيْبَةٍ عَنَّتْ عَن أَمْرِ رَبِّهَا وَرُسُلِهِ ...

8. How many populations that insolently **opposed** the command of their Lord and of His messengers,

C5521. Insolent impiety consists not only in the breach of the rites of religion. Even more vital is the defiance of the laws of nature which Allah has made for us. These laws, for us human beings include those which relate to our fellow-beings in society to whom kindness and consideration form the basis of our social duties. Our duties to our families and our children in intimate matters such as were spoken of in the last Section, are as important as any in our spiritual life. Peoples who forgot the moral law in marriage or family life perished in this world and will have no future in the Hereafter. The lessons apply not only to individuals but to whole nations or social groups.

... فَحَاسِبْنَاهَا حِسَابًا شَدِيدًا وَعَدَبْنَاهَا عَذَابًا نُكْرًا (٨)

did We not then call to account -- to severe account? -- and We imposed on them an exemplary Punishment.

C5522. This refers to the present life: apparently the Hereafter is implied in verse 10 below.

فَدَاقَتْ وَبَالَ أَمْرِهَا وَكَانَ عَاقِبَةُ أَمْرِهَا خُسْرًا (٩)

9. Then did they taste the evil result of their conduct, and the End of their conduct was Perdition.

أَعَدَّ اللَّهُ لَهُمْ عَذَابًا شَدِيدًا ...

10. Allah has prepared for them a severe Punishment (in the Hereafter).

C5523. See last note.

... فَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ يَا أُولِي الْأَلْبَابِ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا قَدْ أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ إِلَيْكُمْ ذِكْرًا (١٠)

Therefore fear Allah, O ye men of understanding -- who have believed! -- for Allah hath indeed sent down to you a Message --

C5524. There is no excuse for us to go astray, seeing that Allah in His infinite Mercy has explained to us His Message by His many Signs around us and clearly by means of the human Teachers and Messengers whom He has sent for our instruction:

see next verse.

رَسُولًا يَتْلُو عَلَيْكُمْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ مُبَيِّنَاتٍ ...

11. A Messenger, who rehearses to you the Signs of Allah containing clear explanations,

... لِيُخْرِجَ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ مِنَ الظُّلُمَاتِ إِلَى النُّورِ ...

that he may lead forth those who believe and do righteous deeds from the depths of Darkness into Light.

C5525. Cf. 14:40:

the unbelievers' state is "like the depths of darkness in a vast deep ocean, overwhelmed with billow topped by billow, topped by dark clouds; depths of darkness, one above another."

Cf. 2:257; "Allah is the Protector of those who have Faith: from the depths of darkness He will lead them forth into light."

... وَمَنْ يُؤْمِن بِاللَّهِ وَيَعْمَلْ صَالِحًا يُدْخِلْهُ جَنَّاتٍ تَجْرِي مِنْ تَحْتِهَا
الْأَنْهَارُ ...

And those who believe in Allah and work righteousness, He will admit to Gardens beneath which rivers flow,

... خَالِدِينَ فِيهَا أَبَدًا ...

to dwell therein forever:

قَدْ أَحْسَنَ اللَّهُ لَهُ رِزْقًا (١١)

Allah has indeed granted for them a most excellent provision.

اللَّهُ الَّذِي خَلَقَ سَبْعَ سَمَاوَاتٍ ...

12. Allah is He Who created seven Firmaments

C5526. "Seven Firmaments."

Cf. 2:29; 17:44; 23:86; and 41:12. [Eds].

... وَمِنَ الْأَرْضِ مِثْلَهُنَّ ...

... and of the earth a similar number.

C5527. As there are grades one above the other in the spiritual kingdom, there are similar grades in our life on this earth. If we take the literal meaning - just as we see the heavenly spheres one above another, over our heads, so we can see that the crust of the earth is built up of geological strata one above another. (R).

... يَنْزِلُ الْأَمْرُ بَيْنَهُنَّ لِتَعْلَمُو أَنَّ اللَّهَ عَلَى كُلِّ شَيْءٍ قَدِيرٌ ...

Through the midst of them (all) **descends** His Command: that ye may know that Allah has power over all things,

C5528. But in all spheres of life and Creation, whatever conception we are able to form of them, it is certain that

the Command or Law of Allah runs through them all, for His knowledge and power extend through all things.

أَوَّانَ اللّٰهُ قَدْ أَحَاطَ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ عِلْمًا (١٢)

and that Allah comprehends all things in (His) Knowledge.